# A CANDID CONSIDERATION

## OF THE CAUSES AND PRETENCES

## *For Separation from the*

## ANCIENT ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

*BY ROBERT WOODWARD,*

VICAR OF HARROLD,

*Bedfordshire.*

Jer. 6. V. 16. Ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

BEDFORD:

*Printed and Sold by W. Smith.*

Also, Sold by Crosby & Letterman, Paternoster Row, London; and may be had of the principal Booksellers in Town and Country.

1800.


BRITISH MUSEUM

# PREFACE.

*AFTER the errors of the dissenters have been pointed out by many learned men, it would be vanity in one of my mean capacity to imagine that I could add any thing new to their judicious labours. But as I am placed by Providence in a situation, in which I have an opportunity of perceiving an additional number of dissenting teachers dispersed among us, and the increase of their meetings and conventicles; I presume it will not be thought superfluous, to detect and lay open some of their erroneous doctrines and practices, and weak pleas for separation: Knowing that no mistake can be so*

*dangerous*

*dangerous as a mistake in Religion. This is my design in publishing the following sheets; that they may probably fall into the hands of those who by a wrong education, or from motives of prejudice forsake the ancient Church of Christ: and who perhaps were they better informed, would prefer the decent, regular, and edifying worship of the Church, to the extempore prayer and preaching of the meetings, where they have not an opportunity in worshipping God, to join with heart and voice, but in prayer are hearers only.*

# *DEDICATION.*

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

## GEORGE PRETTYMAN, D. D.

*LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.*

My Lord,

TO promote the knowledge and practice of the established religion of this Country, and to check the growth of schism, has long been accounted a principal object of your Lordships pastoral vigilance: And this (although customary) was especially remarked in your most excellent charge at the last triennial visitation. As a testimony of obedience to the admonitions and suggestions then delivered, with all submission to your Lordship's exalted station in the Church as my Diocesan,

cesan, I present to your Lordship the following treatise; which contains a candid consideration of the causes and pretences for separating from the established religion, and a vindication of the doctrines, worship, and government of our Church from the objections of the dissenters, and replies to them upon the authority of scripture. Being fully persuaded that an undertaking of this kind is seasonable, and might be in some degree useful to prevent infusion of religious errors, and dissentions from the Church, I am induced to present it to publick attention, and an earnest hope in your Lordship's permission has encouraged me in the dedication. I might blush with unworthiness for presuming, to prefix your distinguished name to so imperfect a composition, but your Lordship's approbation will shield and countenance the design. And I hope you will not think it degrading to your superior judgment,

judgement, to suffer your name to adorn the dedication.

The exertions of the dissenters are at this time so manifestly great, that they authorize every clergyman of the established Church, to endeavour in a rational and peaceable way to check their increase. And as this is my intent in the present treatise, I ought not to doubt of your Lordship's acceptance and approbation of it, which will confer a very substantial honour and favour on him, who is

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

and most humble Servant

ROBERT WOODWARD.

HARROLD,

26th. of May, 1801.

## THE CHURCH A SOCIETY OF CHRIST'S FORMING; ITS GOVERNMENT BY BISHOPS FOUNDED ON THE PRACTICE OF THE APOSTLES, AND THE RECORDS OF ANTIQUITY.

THAT I may with more ease point out the errors of the dissenters, and the nature and quality of schism, it is necessary first to consider the nature, design, and constitution of the visible Church of Christ.

And I rejoice in having the advantages of scripture and antiquity to assist me to defend truth against error, the ancient Catholick Church against the new conventicles of those who schismatically divide themselves from it.

The visible Church is one collective body, comprehending all societies of Christians dispersed over the face of the earth: And are called one Catholick or universal Church, because they profess the same faith to be saved by the death and mediation of Christ, and also a community of ordinances. It is also called the Church of Christ, because he purchased it with his blood. Into this society or Church of Christ, persons who are lawfully baptised are admitted. Baptism being the pledge to assure us of a future inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Having by baptism entered into the service of the living God, we are directed and have professedly promised to resist and renounce those enemies of our Salvation, the world, the flesh, and the devil: that by a sincere performance of the baptismal covenant, we may be entitled to the blessings and privileges of the Gospel; *viz.* pardon of sin and eternal life thro' Jesus Christ.

The visible church therefore being a society of Christ's appointment, no person can be said to discharge his duty as his disciple who is not a member of it. Moreover, all the benefits purchased for mankind are annexed to our initiation into this society. It is not a thing left to the choice and liberty of men, whether they will belong to this society or not, but we are obliged

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to be entered into it, on pain of forfeiting our union with Christ, and our title to all the privileges of the Gospel. Unity is one essential mark of the Church of Christ, therefore the Apostle exhorts his Ephesian converts, to endeavour to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace.

For says he, Chap. 4. and 4. & 5. Vers. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Here we have a true representation of the universal Church of Christ, *viz.* That it is one in respect to the same sacraments, and of being sanctified with the same spirit; one in respect of the same head Christ Jesus: and one in respect of the same hope of glory and immortality.

Therefore as the universal Church of Christ is but one, it is a matter of importance to be a member of that Church, whereby we are entitled to the privileges and blessings it possesses.

For the regular ordering and governing the Church, which is a society of Christ's forming, he had no sooner laid its foundation, than he chose

chose twelve, whom he named Apostles, to whose care and conduct he committed the administration of it. Every thing concerning the Church must be done in the name, and by the authority of Christ.

So essentially necessary is government and order to the peace of mankind that no society whether civil or sacred can subsist without it. For where every one is left to do what he pleases, there must be confusion and every evil work.

Our Lord therefore who knew the failings and disorderly passions of men, after his resurrection proceeded to the more complete and regular establishment of his Church upon earth. He commissioned not all his disciples, but only the eleven principal disciples or Apostles, to whom he gave command, saying, Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you always even to the end of the world.

If the form of government which the Apostles established in the Church was not expressly directed by Christ in person, yet we must consider

der it as done by the influence of the Holy spirit. What that form of government was which the Apostles established in the Christian Church, appears plainly in their writings; which was by Bishops. And that they acted in this plan of constitution, agreeable to the will of their Lord, (whose commands they readily executed as soon as they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost) is manifest from the successes which attended their preachings and undertakings, and from the miracles they were enabled to perform. For these are certain testimonies that they were aided and directed by power from on high.

Therefore the conclusion is obvious, that the direction and government by Bishops is of divine appointment. But of what appointment is that Church (if it can be called a Church) that is not settled upon this apostolic plan, denying the superiority of religious orders, a method which has been found by many hundred Years experience to be highly beneficial to the regular discharge of sacred offices, and greatly conducive to the increase of piety and virtue.

Tho' it is unnecessary to multiply upon a matter that is sufficiently clear, yet it may afford instruction to some, to observe that Bishops were appointed by the Apostles, and the practice of

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the primitive Church furnished such information, that ought to satisfy every unprejudiced person.

When the Apostles first preached the Gospel to the World, we read in Acts 14. and 23 Ver. That they ordained elders in every city, and to them they committed the care of their new converts. It cannot be doubted but the elders were the same whom we now call Bishops; according to the Epistle of St. Paul to Titus, Chap. 1, and 5 & 7 Ver. For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.

For a Bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; thus the Scriptures teach us that the form of government settled in the Christian Church in the Days of the Apostles was under the superiority of Bishops. And as long as we follow the holy Scriptures for our rule and guide in religious matters we cannot err.

With respect to the practice of ancient times in the Christian Church, we are assured from history that Timothy, Titus, Ignatius who saw Christ in the flesh, Polycarp disciple of Saint John and Bishop of Smyrna, and who was ordained by the Apostles themselves; and Clement

Clement mentioned by Saint Paul in Phil. Chap. 4. and 3. Ver. these and others the immediate disciples of the Apostles exercised the episcopal office, in the same manner as it is at present in the Church to which we belong. And this we may be sure was strictly conformable to the minds of the Apostles, under whose superintendance they acted. As the Church was settled in this manner in the primitive ages abroad, we shall find that the laws and constitutions of our Church agree with this plan.

In Britain the Christian faith as Gildas an author of good credit informs us, was planted here in the latter end of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, about the Year of our Lord 37.

The Christian Religion being thus settled in this nation, the government of it was here as in other Countries, by Bishops and Metropolitans. For at the counsel of Arles in the Year 314, we find three bishops, a priest, and a deacon subscribing the decrees of that synod: Two of which were the Bishops of York and London.

During the reign of Constantine who was zealous to propagate the Christian faith, there is no doubt but it flourished and increased in this Island.

In the decline of the Roman empire, and

when the Scots and Picts made inroads into this Country, as did also the Saxons; Christianity even then, tho' struggling with many difficulties, yet continued and increased under the greatest hardship. Upon Austin's arrival in 596, after he was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury he found many Churches among the Britains; and as Bede relates * 7 Bishops, under the archbishop of Caer-leon upon Usk or Isca.

Thus the Church in our nation as well as those abroad were under the care and government of Bishops. But for the first six or seven hundred Years there were no parish Churches, or settled priests.

The great Lords as they saw occasion, built places for public worship, which were supplied by priests sent by the Bishops to preach and officiate in them.

In the latter end of the seventh century, or about the beginning of the reign of Egbert, Theodore archbishop of Canterbury, by his diligence and care, not only procured Churches to be found up and down in the Country, but to set out the bounds of parishes.

* *The Bishops are Hereford, Landaff, Lhan Padern Vaur, Bangor, St. Asaph, Worcester, and Morganensis.*

Afterwards

Afterwards as the number of Churches began to be increased and endowed, it was always done by the appointment of the Bishops; who fixed upon the place where they should be built, consecrated them when erected, and assigned the bounds and districts of the several parishes, within which, the priest of every Church should officiate.

Thus rules and discipline were established, and ministers settled in their respective parishes under the jurisdiction of Bishops.

It is evident therefore, that the government of the Church under Bishops, is according to the practice of the Apostles, and from the first records of the christian Church. Bishops were the Apostles successors in the Church of Christ, and in their superiority over priests and deacons. Under this form of government, the Church has continued for above seventeen hundred Years: From its first establishment to the present time. As this form is Apostolical, man can have no right to alter it. And that communion must be safest which is most agreeable to the practice of the Apostles.

The conclusion from the foregoing observations, I think is very plain; that the Church of England

England as now by Law established, is greatly superior in its agreement with Scripture and antiquity, to dissenting meetings, which are but novelties and late innovations: set up in opposition to the ancient Church of Christ, the place on earth of God's more especial presence, where the worship is performed in a regular form of prayer; so that every worshipper may join with heart and voice in a natural form of devotion, contained in the book of common prayer, which ought to be accounted a precious treasure: For it is the old way and the good way, Chap. 6 and Ver. 16. Ask then for the old paths, where is the good way? and walk therein, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. The paths which our ancestors, forefathers, and predecessors trod, and which if piously and faithfully pursued will be found to be the road to heaven.

## OF THE SIN OF SCHISM.

THE Church being a society of Christ's forming by his Apostles, as I have observed in the foregoing subject, the discipline and government of which, has continued the same in regular succession from its first establishment, to the present time. Separation therefore from this Apostolic plan must be sinful, as it is a kind of rebellion against its divine founder.

The Christian Church is by St. Paul in his epistle to the Eph. Chap. 1. called the body, of which Christ is the head. And in his first epistle to the Cor. Chap. 1. He beseeches the brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to speak the same thing, and that there be no division: No schisms among them, but that they would be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. In the 12. Chap. of the same epistle, he argues from the connection between the members of the natural body,

body, and the members of the spiritual, that there should be no more schism or separation from one body than the other. For as the natural body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that body being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body. And in another place Eph. 4. Ver. 14. he gives us the design of being baptized into this one body. And why God has taken such particular care of his church, that the members of it from thenceforth might be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head even Christ. From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working of the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. These and other expressions, whereby the Scripture denotes the unity of the Christian Church, signify one communion.

The Church being described in Scripture as the body of Christ, Schism or separation from it, shews a want of obedience to that government which

which Christ by his Apostles ordained in the Church, and is different to that pattern of the primitive Christians, who continued stedfast in the Apostles doctrine.

Now the nature of this sin is such, that it is a direct violation of the order established in the Christian Church. Christ has but one body, those who separate from the body of Christ, are no longer of his body. And the ancient Christians believed that Schism, separated men from Christ, and put them out of a state of Salvation. If there is no Salvation out of the Church, Schism must be a very dangerous sin. The dissenters are indeed erroneously led to believe, that whereever a congregation is assembled, in any place or company, under whatever teachers, provided they call themselves protestants, and pretend to offer devotions to God, there is the Church: Whether it be a barn or an house, used for worldly convenience and profit.

But the Churches of Christ, have been set apart and appropriated only to religious worship, and have never been applied to worldly uses; for that would have been a pollution of them. Therefore for the more decent and honourable performance of the public worship of God, and for the more regular discharge of

solemn duties, some particular places and buildings, have been set apart from the creation of the world. Adam and his sons had a place set apart for this purpose. The patriarchs had also a place, altars, and mountains. In the wilderness the people of God had a moveable tabernacle. "And God was pleased to hearken to Solomon, at "the dedication of his magnificent temple, who "prayed, that when the people had sinned, when "they were smitten by the enemy, or when the "heavens were shut up that there was no rain, "or if there be in the land, famine or pestilence, "blasting or mildew, he beseeched God, that "when they prayed toward the temple which he "had built, that he would hearken to them and "forgive their sin. And when Solomon had fi-"nished the house of the Lord: The Lord said "unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy sup-"plication, that thou hast made before me; I "have hallowed this house which thou hast built, "to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes "and mine heart shall be there perpetually."

The Psalms of David abound with expressions of zeal for the house of God, "I was glad "when they said unto me, we will go in the house "of the Lord. For thither the tribes of Israel go "up to worship. O go your ways into his gates "with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise:"

praise: And we read in the new Testament, that our Saviour attended the public service of the temple and the synagogue. These are examples that are not only safe to imitate, but our duty to practice. We are moreover commanded by God, to reverence his sanctuary. It can never be right to forsake these consecrated buildings, and set up the public worship in houses or barns, which sometimes are applied to man's use and service, and at others to the worship of God.

These meeting houses or conventicles are erected if not in opposition to, at least independent of that discipline and government which is of divine establishment.

But as Christ formed only one Church, there can be but one communion, and as that Church is a visible society, distinctly known by its apostolic mode of government, its ministers and sacraments, a wilful separation from it must be rebellion against the divine ordinance. Custom indeed seems so far to have reconciled many to this sin, and dissention is become so frequent, that it seems not to be accounted so heinous as in the first days of Christianity. What was Schism then, will be so now, the nature and magnitude of the crime remain the same, notwithstanding the opinion of men upon it may have

 changed.

changed. We are not left to human opinion in order to be certified of the sinfulness of this practice, of forsaking the ancient Church of Christ, and rending his body in pieces: But we must depend upon the inspired word of God.

Saint Paul speaks of Schism as a carnal sin, when he reproves the Corinthians 1. Ep. Chap. 3. Ver. 3. "For whereas there is among you, envyings, strife and divisions, are yea not carnal?" Thus the Apostle declares separation to be a work of the flesh, and symptom of a carnal mind, and not a token of a more pious and devout heart. It is often the source of confusion and disorder in spiritual affairs; and destructive of that peace and charity, without which all other attainments are of no value: For these are the virtues which should unite us to God, and to one another.

The scripture has told us, 'tis our duty as Christians to unite in affections to one another, and in our devotions to God; and we are also taught that it must needs be very pernicious to the Church, that her members should be divided: And Christ has commanded his disciples, that this love and unity should always continue among them, as being all by one spirit baptized into one body; therefore no pretence whatever can be sufficient to set aside the obligation, that all

all Christians are under to be of one communion.

To frequent and join meetings that are set up in opposition to the Church as by Law established, can never tend to the edifying the body of Christ; where men raise themselves into the place of teachers, usurping the office of Clergymen, without being regularly commissioned by the Laws of the nation, and consequently without warrant from God.

The ill consequences and the danger to which people expose themselves by forsaking the Church, are so many and great, that in a matter of such importance we ought to deal honestly with ourselves, and place this subject in a right light, before we take such a rash step, as forsaking the communion of the Church; as if it were indifferent whether people attended Church, or a meeting or conventicle. It is a duty to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. In order to preserve this external communion of the Christian Church, we must flee divisions.

He understands but little of Religion, or of his duty, who makes light of the evil of Schism. For whatever the Apostles and primitive Christians

tians have said upon this subject, remains in full force even to this day. As long as the Church continues the same as it was at its first establishment by Christ and his Apostles, in its doctrines and government, division or separation from it, is according to Scripture, an heinous and dangerous sin. And St. Paul earnestly exhorts us to avoid those who are guilty of it. His words are very striking, and ought to be regarded. Rom. Chap. 16. Ver. 17. "Now I beseech "you, brethern, mark them which cause divisions "and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye "have learned; and avoid them. For they that "are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ." And yet this is the divine master we are to serve, who in pity to man came down from heaven, to point out the road thither. But it is the constant employment of the evil one, to draw mankind aside into by-paths, from the strait road directed by our Lord.

The Apostle in this place says, "they that cause divisions and offences, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly." The meaning of which words I take to be, that such use the Cloak of Religion, under the pretence of being of a more perfect communion, than the Apostolic Church, the better and more commodiously to answer their own ends and views:

views: For thus continues St. Paul, "by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple."

## ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES, NONE CAN ORDAIN OR APPOINT MINISTERS IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, BUT THE BISHOPS.

I HAVE already observed that the Church is a society, distinguished by its order and government. To the establishment of order and government, a regular appointment of men to the administration of particular offices is essential. With regard to the discharge of sacred offices, a man ought to be commissioned according to the precepts of holy Scripture, and the first ages of the Church, and the established Laws of his Country. Before he can be God's ambassador, he ought to have God's commission. No man can pretend to this, unless he has received it immediately from God, himself, or mediately

mediately from those, to whom God has delegated a power to impart it to others. He who pretends to have his commission, must be able to shew that he has it from God, or from them, to whom God has delegated a power to commission others. God now gives no immediate commission. Bishops are the only persons to whom God has delegated a power to appoint others to act as ministers of his Church. Therefore ordination by Bishops, is the only true and regular appointment to the priestly office in the Church of Christ. The truth of this I prove thus, Our Saviour is by St. Paul Heb. III. 1. called the great Apostle and high Priest. And by St. Peter, the Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls. The office of Bishops is originally founded in the Person and office of the Messias, who before his ascension into heaven sent and empowered his holy Apostles, in the like manner as his Father had sent him; to execute the same apostolical, episcopal, and pastoral office, for the ordering and governing his Church until his coming again. And so the same office to continue in them, and their successors to the end of the world. This is evident from several texts of scripture, and the following practice of the Church of Christ, in the times of the Apostles, and in the purest and primitive times nearest them.

The Apostles having thus received episcopal power from Christ himself, ordained seven Deacons. Acts Chap. 6. Ver. 6. And in Chap. 14. We find an account of an ordination of presbyters, but this was performed by two Apostles, Paul and Barnabas. When Timothy was by St. Paul settled Bishop of Ephesus, he was invested with the powers of ordination. Therefore St. Paul laid down certain rules 1. Tim. Chap. 3. to be observed by him in the promotion of persons to the office of Bishop or Deacon. To this purpose St. Paul also gave to Titus Bishop of Crete, a special commission to make ordinations. St. Philip tho' he was an evangelist, yet he could not give confirmation to the Samaritans whom he had baptized, but the Apostles were sent for; for that as well as ordination was part of the power reserved to the episcopal or apostolick order.

Thus as far as the Scripture informs us, we find there is not one instance of any ordination performed, or any commission given, but by some person or persons who had episcopal authority, which is founded originally in Christ, was by him conferred on his Apostles, and by them on others, who are allowed to exercise it in the same extent, in as full and ample a manner as as they themselves did. If we consider the testimonies

timonies of the ancient Fathers of the Catholic Church concerning the power of ordination, we shall find it always to have been appropriated to the Bishops.

The conclusion from these premises, is plain and easy. *viz.* that the office was instituted by the Apostles, and the power of ordination was by them committed to the Bishops, therefore they only can ordain and commission ministers in the Church of Christ. According to the scriptures this is the only rightful ordination, which is performed by an Apostle, or Apostolical men, as the Bishops are.

It is essentially necessary that before any person takes upon himself to perform those holy offices of preaching the word of God, and administring the blessed sacraments, that he should be regularly and lawfully ordained, according to the practice of the Apostles, and the primitive Christians.

The right and lawful door of entrance into the ministry is by commission from the Bishop. And our Saviour tells us, that he that entereth not by the door into the Sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth in by the door is

the shepherd of the sheep.

For a person to take upon himself the discharge of the holy offices of the priesthood, which they were never invested with authority to exercise, is something worse than presumption.

But the party who undertakes the office of the ministry in dissenting congregations, is supposed to enter upon it, by an inward call of the spirit, and an idea of great personal sanctity. How far they act truly and consistent with scripture, will appear from the following arguments.

The expediency and necessity of an inward call to the work of the ministry, is undoubtedly requisite. But whether they who are in a state of Schism, and whose business it is to bring others into the same, have been called by the holy Spirit, is to be considered and determined by the rule of God's revealed word.

When the inward call of the Spirit, is pleaded as an authority for undertaking the sacred office, it is reasonable to expect, that it should be accompanied with the outward call or regular appointment to that office.

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He who is desirous to be a lawful minister of Jesus Christ, must receive his delegation to the sacred and important trust, in the way prescribed by the example of the Apostles, and their immediate successors, and by the practice of the universal Church: And also according to the order of the Church, and of the laws of the Realm of which he is a subject. Without this appointment by the laws of his Country, personal sanctity, or supposed spiritual qualification, (or even if real) is not a sufficient justification or warrant, for a man to take upon himself the discharge of an office, for which he may think himself qualified, because warmly disposed to it.

The supposed idea of great personal holiness was fatal to Korah and his Company; as recorded in Numbers. Chap. 16.

But even if a person should be properly affected with zeal, and his intention good, yet this will be no sufficient warrant or justification for an irregular entrance into the service of God, as his ambassador, without a special and lawful Commission.

When Uzzah was conveying the ark from Kirjath-Jearim, instigated by a good intention, he

he put forth his hand to hold the ark, to prevent its falling, because the oxen stumbled. "But "Uzzah was struck dead on the spot, for inva- "ding the office of the priesthood." 1. Chron. 13. Chap. 9. Ver.

When Saul ventured to offer the burnt offering in the absence of Samuel, though he meant well, the sentence pronounced against him was, that in so doing he had done foolishly, that he had not kept the commandment of the Lord his God, which he had commanded, therefore his kingdom should not continue.

This important office, being of divine appointment, is not to be undertaken without due qualification.

For besides being moved to it by the holy Ghost, and being lawfully ordained, the acquisition of an adequate portion of learning is necessary; such as is useful to acquire a clearness of thought, and precision of language: And such also as is requisite for the profession.

Though some of the dissenting teachers are men of education, yet it is well known that many among them, who take upon themselves to be preachers of the Gospel, are uneducated: Brought up to trades, they could not have had

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an opportunity of being prepared for the high and sacred office of a minister: Therefore as they are not proper for the undertaking, it is indecent and irreverent in them to engage in it.

For how can such be able to instruct others in the knowledge and duties of religion, who themselves have never acquired by study and application, a clear conception of its evidences, doctrines and laws.

How can such men be qualified to explain the means, the conditions, and the consequences of our final acceptance with God, subjects which ought to be frequently and copiously treated.

Neither have they had the opportunity of acquiring such introductory learning, as is useful and ornamental to the holy profession, and necessary to convey their information in perspicuous terms. Destitute of Greek learning, the language in which the new testament was originally written, they can understand but little of its phraseology. A preacher of the Gospel, who undertakes duties of such high importance, as to promote and improve the practice of Religion, ought to possess an extensive compass of knowledge: for he who is untaught himself, cannot teach others.

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The Apostles indeed at Pentecost, who had the gift of tongues, had no need of human learning; but as miracles have now ceased, it is convenient that he who would be a teacher of Religion, should be possessed of intellectual endowments equal to the undertaking: this he must acquire by learning and industry.

Those who without a due preparation, aspire to the important office of a minister and preacher of the Gospel, would do well to weigh their pretensions to the sacred employment.

They should reflect, whether they have been educated scholars sufficient for that station, which requires a competent share of learning, to enable them to understand and expound the Scriptures. To prepare a Student as a Barrister, or a Physician, some years study and great application are unavoidably necessary: Every mechanical art, requires a course of years, before a person can be master in it. Surely the most important of all others, that which is employed in the sublimest exercises, and the cure of souls, ought not to be arrived at without attention and preparation.

An ambassador of God should be qualified in the best manner possible; by diligence and care

care he should be furnished with the nature and conditions of his engagement, that he may execute his office acceptably to God and serviceably to man.

He ought to be a person entirely free from trade or business; separated from all worldly cares or concerns, that he may employ himself in such studies, as will furnish him with lively thoughts, divine meditatious, and proper expressions, that he may be enabled to discharge with propriety and efficacy, every part of that great message of reconciliation, which is committed to his charge.

Such (at least) ought to be the preacher of the Gospel, and minister of Religion.

That the dissenting preachers, are not men of this character and description is well known.

Many of them are engaged in trade or manual labour; so that tradesmen and laymen take upon themselves to perform part of the priest's office. Unprepared they thrust themselves precipitately into the Lord's vineyard without a legal call.

But if they are not occupied in trade or

 business,

business, they cannot religiously and lawfully set up for teachers of the Gospel, meerly because they imagine themselves called by the Spirit. However if their inward call is real; if their natural gifts and learned acquirements are great and excellent: Yet it is necessary that the outward call be regular; that they be commissioned and authorized by God, in the way of his own appointment, before they presume to exercise any part of the sacred function.

The regular admission into the priest's office, is after the manner and practice of the Apostles.

The Apostles were the first to whom the care and office of the ministry was committed. Who having been appointed, commissioned, and ordained by our Lord; they in like manner commissioned and ordained others. Therefore what the Apostles did at first, that the Church does to this day, and will do so for ever. For when St. Paul had given to the Bishop of Ephesus rules of government, he commanded that they should be observed 'till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The immediate successors of the Apostles, made it the object of their endeavours to propagate the faith of Christ. And the piety of succeeding

ceeding ages contributed to the same in building Churches, and founding and endowing colleges and seminaries of religious learning.

The Christian Church was founded by the Apostles, who were Bishops, and the first preachers of the Gospel. And a succession of ministers commissioned, and ordained by Bishops (the successors of the Apostles) has continued in the Church, for near eighteen centuries.

The gates of hell, the devices of misguided men have not been able to prevail against it.

Ordination by Bishops being derived from the Apostles, and their immediate successors, is the only legal admission into the priesthood: every other ordination by presbyters or priests (even tho' ordained themselves) is without the concurrence of the Bishop, null and void. Much less can they who have never been ordained themselves ordain others; such ordination signifies nothing. It is not entering in at the door of the Sheepfold. Their ordination is not valid: therefore they are not lawful ministers.

It is notorious, that there are many such

 ministers;

ministers; men of all trades and callings usurp the office of Clergymen, and exercise the sacred function without any commission.

These men, the propagators of dissention; in spreading their tenets and doctrines, and perverting (not converting) their hearers, are indefatigable. Their method in causing and increasing divisions, is as follows. In a parish where there were no dissenters, nor dissenting meetings; application is made to some inhabitant with whom there is a probability of succeeding, to use his house or barn as a place of meeting, to pray, and to preach the Gospel. If unsuccessful, then a dissenter is contrived to be settled in that parish: a meeting is soon afterwards announced; the novelty induces the neighbours to assemble: When the different mode of religious service, together with new and uncouth expressions, are disgusting to some: Others mock and laugh: While the wise and truly religious, (if any such should be present to hear) are shocked at the usurpation on the sacred office: Some few are gained over to believe their erroneous doctrines of a new, easier, and better road to Salvation, than through the Church of God. These meetings once commenced, continue, and become established. A preacher, some layman, or tradesman,

man, or one not lawfully ordained to perform the office of a minister, is fixed upon to attend.

Our Saviour in reproving the Jews, said, It is written, my House shall be called the house of prayer. But surely no reasonable person, will call the dwelling house of a man, his shop, or his barn, the house of God; because a new meeting is established there; to draw away the members of Christ from frequenting their ancient parish Church, which was many ages since dedicated to religious worship, and preserved entirely for that purpose.

Thus in a parish, where for time immemorial dissention was not known, divisions are caused and increased; and where the inhabitants all in general looked up to their lawful parochial priest, as their only pastoral guide: regular in their attendance at Church, they joined in the service with heart and voice; listened with attention to his sermons: And receiving from him religions instructions in the Church, they revered and respected him out of it. Happy in having the Church of God placed among them; they accounted it (as in reality it is) the road to heaven: Thither they went to pledge their mutual vows of wedlock: There they baptized and christened: And there they attended piously and decently to

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pay the last obsequies to their departed friends. Of one mind and one faith in spiritual concerns, no novel notions, or forced constructions of particular texts of scripture were suggested to them: consequently no discord or uneasiness about religion: But with satisfied faith, they followed the way and practice of their forefathers. Some few parishes of this description there are still: And I hope will continue; happy in being free from the sin of Schism.

How great pity, as well as a crime, to interrupt the spiritual peace and concord of such place! to unsettle the minds of people, by introducing new notions of religion, contrary to the doctrine which they had been taught; thereby causing division and offences; destroying the peace and harmony of neighbours and families.

"But it must needs be that offences come."

From hence it plainly appears, that these persons who thus thrust themselves into the priest's office, are not lawfully ordained to the exercise of holy rites. The Apostle St. Paul earnestly entreats all Christians to preserve the peace of the Church; and to avoid those that break it; instead of attending such irregular assemblies

semblies, where we may incur the anger of God, who may give us up to strong delusions, to be unsettled, and disturbed in our minds, alway learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth: We should adhere to those rules, and to the practice of such a life as our Church instructed from the Scriptures directs to its members. To this end in the established Church, we have a liturgy, or stated form of service, in which the whole congregation assembled, may become parties in religious worship: and as it is a business in which every individual is concerned; they have an opportunity of joining in supplication, prayer, and praise, to the throne of grace. The ministers of the established Church are men of erudition; trained up in the habits of learning, they are skilled in their profession: understanding and able to expound and preach the scriptures; and which they are lawfully authorized to do, because approved, and regularly ordained by their Bishops.

## A STATED FORM OF PRAYER HAS MANY ADVANTAGES, WHICH EXTEMPORE PRAYER CANNOT PRETEND TO. THE EXCELLENCY OF OUR COMMON PRAYER. THE CHURCH LITURGY COMPARED WITH THE PERFORMANCES OF DIVINE WORSHIP IN DISSENTING MEETINGS.

ALL parties so far agree, that there ought to be some modes and circumstances in the worship and service of God: The Apostles who were ordered to make disciples, and to gather them into Church communion, gave general rules for order and decency. 1. Cor. XIV. 26. and 40. Let all things be done to edifying.

edifying. Let all things be done decently and in order.

It will be granted by all, that God has an unquestionable right to give rules how he will be worshiped. It will also be as readily granted that the scriptures contain the revelation of God's will concerning his worship. And since God has vouchsafed us these directions, we may suppose that all ways of worship are displeasing to him, that are not contained or warranted by examples of holy men mentioned therein.

In the old testament we have authorities and examples of a set form of prayer for public worship. Moses after the passage of the Israelites through the red sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians in it, composed a song of thanksgiving as contained in Exod. xv. That this song is a form of prayer spoken to God, is evident from the words of it; and it is equally evident that it was precomposed, for it is expressly mentioned 1. v. That Moses and the Children of Israel sang this song; therefore they must have learnt it before.

In Num. vi. 22. We read that God prescribed to Moses a set form of prayer and benediction when he blessed the people.

David composed many Psalms for the service of the tabernacle. And Solomon and the holy Kings of Judah continued them in the constant and uninterrupted practice of the Levites in the temple worship.

After the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, the priests and levites sung together by course, after the ordinance of David King of Israel, Ezra. III. 10. consequently their psalms were precomposed. So that the use of set forms of prayers was established amongst the Jews by inspired persons, that is by the command of God himself. The example of our Saviour while he conversed upon Earth is a most excellent pattern for Christians to imitate; he lived in the communion of the Jewish Church; he joined and frequented the public assemblies of worship, preached in their temples and in their synagogues. John the Baptist taught his disciples a form of prayer. And the disciples of our Lord begged the same favour, and it was granted them as they desired; for Christ gave them an exact composure of words which shews that he intended it for a set form of prayer. This is a sufficient warrant for Christians to use a set form of prayer; as it seems to have been the practice of our Saviour and his Apostles who joined in the worship of the

temple

temple and the synagogue. But our Lord by prescribing a form to his disciples, has put this matter out of all dispute. In teaching his disciples to pray, he did not direct them to wait for the impulse of the spirit, and immediate inspiration from God; he did not direct when they prayed to speak what shall come into their minds, without taking thought about what they shall say. But in their prayers to God, he commanded them to use a set form of words. And this is commanded in a very clear manner. To say the substance of this prayer in words of our invention, is not to obey the command of Christ; we must pray in that exact and comprehensive form of words which he has ordered. And there is no doubt but the Apostles and primitive Christians observed this command. Therefore we have the command of God, and the examples of his Saints for offering up our prayers to him in a set and prepared form of words; so we have the like example for joining voices in offering these words. The people are to bear a part in public worship: For in Psal. CVI. 48. it is commanded, "Let all the people say, Amen; praise the Lord." At the dedication of the temple when Solomon had finished his prayer, the people performed their part, 1 Chr. VII. 3. They bowed themselves with their faces to the

ground upon the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying, "He is good for "his mercy endureth for ever." This service was ordered by the holy spirit, and plainly shews that God approves of the people having a share or part peculiar to themselves in public worship. And that the Apostles continued this practice in the Christian Church of the people's joining with their voices in the public service is manifest from 1. Cor. XIV. 16. "Else "when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall "he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen, at the giving of thanks?"

As there is no doubt but a stated form of prayer was always used in the Church, so we are convinced of the utility and necessity of it, from the authority and example of Christ, who left a prescribed form for the continual use of his followers to the end of the world.

It is evident to common sense and reason, that precomposed forms of prayer must be safer, and more pious and prudent, and every way more eligible, than extemporary effusions, poured forth at the discretion, and according to the abilities of the minister. The effusions of an extempore prayer, are often incoherent in conception, and confused in utterance. The minister

minister (or rather the person who takes upon himself that office) is forced to make use of such words as come first to his memory, having not leisure enough to chuse his words, without making long and indecent pauses and interruptions. No man can be so secure of expressing himself intelligibly to the people, when he prays extempore, as he might if he took time beforehand to chuse his words, and his expressions. So that the congregation may be more sure of understanding what they pray for when they join with a form, than when they join with extempore prayers. A great advantage to the congregation's joining in public forms is, that they are more secured, as to decency and solemnity of their public worship. But in extempore prayers, the decency and solemnity of the performance depend entirely upon the abilities and frame of temper of the minister. So that if he happens to be a man of forgetful memory, or unfruitful invention, he cannot perform his office with decency and solemnity: instead of the minds of the people being affected with devotion, his blundering, hesitations, and confusions excite scorn and laughter. It cannot be denied but this is often the case. And yet some pretend it is not they that pray, but the holy Ghost; it is his gift and his immediate inspiration; and the spirit, they say, is not to

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be limited by forms. Dreadful mistake. Can any man of sense now claim so great, so distinguishing an honour and privilege. That this is a deceitful error, appears from this one argument. If their prayers were dictated by the spirit of God, they must be as infallible as himself; whatever God dictates or inspires must be perfect, and free from all possibility of error or mistake: so would their extempore prayers be, if they were inspired and dictated by the spirit of God. But the incoherencies, the nonsense, and rudeness, to say no worse, that are sometimes uttered in extempore prayers, give us no reason to think, that the person who prays, is much assisted in it by the holy spirit. In fact, to attribute these faults and blunders in extempore prayers, to immediate inspiration, would be to impute our mistakes and follies to the holy Ghost. Surely, if God had thought fit to have continued the gift of inspiration by prayer, it would have been in order to the securing his worship from those imperfections, and to which extempore prayers of men's conceiving are liable; that so the public worship of God, which is the most serious and solemn thing in the world, might not be rendered ridiculous by the ignorance and inadvertency of men.

Stated forms of prayers are not liable to these irregularities

irregularities and imperfections, therefore of consequence they are more pleasing to God, whom we have reason to suppose, will more propitiously hearken to our requests, when we are studiously careful to make them in the best and handsomest manner we can.

If we had a petition to make to some great person, we should premeditate and so prepare ourselves with words and expressions suitable to our purpose, we should be unwilling to appear before him unprepared, and heedlessly say any thing to him, that came first in our minds. This we should not judge a probable means to please, and obtain our requests. Much more ought we to attend carefully to our words in prayer and supplication to God. In Eccles. v. 2. We have this excellent advice. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine "heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth:" When we appear before God in public worship, we should come prepared, and not carelessly make our supplications and prayers to him without considering what we are about to utter.

Public forms of prayer have this advantage. That the people may address themselves with greater

greater preparation; as they may peruse the words beforehand, and consider the sense and matter of them. It must doubtless be an advantage to a person's devotion to be satisfied, that what he is about to pray for, is good and acceptable to God; he may join with stronger faith, and surer hope of being heard and accepted. Also in set forms of prayer the people may satisfy themselves beforehand, that there is nothing in the prayers they are to join with, but what becomes public worship, which is the most serious and solemn thing in the world. These and many other advantages are peculiar to the divine service of the established Church. The reading of the holy scriptures makes a considerable part of the Church service. It consists also of well composed prayers comprehensive of all our common cases and necessities, and the circumstances of every individual in the congregation will probably fall in with the subject of one prayer or another.

The Church service is so replete with the spirit of prayer, and so comformable to the first ages of Christianity, that in the established Church of this kingdom, Almighty God is worshipped in the beauty of holiness; having a form of service so excellently constructed, as to qualify the congregation assembled, to join in every

every part of the worship that is performing; and also well suited to preserve a due spirit of devotion. Such is the decent and reasonable service of the Church.

Let us now consider the manner of performing public worship in dissenting meetings. There is no public form either of confession, prayer, or thanksgiving: consequently the congregation have not the opportunity to join in the worship of God; they are hearers only; it is the minister (so called) who prays and not the people: for it is not possible for them to join in petitions, or to lift up their voice with one accord in the celebration of praises, which they are unprepared to accompany, because ignorant what may be uttered. As the congregation are but little concerned in the performance of the service, they can in reason have little to expect from their attendance. But this is their error, *viz.* they think it is the minister's business to pray, and their's attentively to listen to him: thus they regard a prayer in the same manner as they do a sermon, expecting instruction and entertainment from it.

In the public worship of the established Church, the congregation may all become ac-

tual partakers, and may join in the solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts: and in the words of holy David, they worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord their maker. But in the meetings they are no otherwise employed in time of prayer, than in the sermon; that is to sit at their ease and hear: and not in an humble posture to pray. On the other hand the members of the Church upon their knees, presenting their petitions to God with heart and voice, with as much fervor and devotion as the minister. Such is the difference between the performance of divine worship in the Church and the meeting. Now to determine which is performed with the most advantage to man, and the most acceptably to God, requires no great discernment.

In the Church service there is no danger of such unwary expressions, arising from confusion or incoherent conception, as may degrade the solemnity of prayer, or may insult the majesty of heaven, by offering up prayers to the throne of heavenly grace in a confused and unprepared manner. But the public worship is performed as it ought to be: both minister and people joining with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts in the solemn sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving;

thanksgiving; and repeating that prescribed form of prayer, which our Saviour has left for the continual use of his disciples and followers to the end of the World.

## ON THE PRETENCE OF SEPARATING FROM THE CHURCH, BECAUSE THE GOSPEL IS NOT PREACHED IN IT.

THIS erroneous and unjust assertion ought not to pass unnoticed, for the honour and credit of the ministers of the Church of England, and also for the sake of those that make it. There is no assertion, no method whatever, which the dissenters find more successful in drawing away the members of the Church than this: though the imputation is false. The Clergy were ordained to preach the Gospel, and engaged themselves so to do; and from their general character both for piety and learning, I dare affirm, that in this respect they fulfil their engagement: and I have certain knowledge of many worthy ministers, who are cautious not to merit this charge,

charge, are notwithstanding reported not to preach the Gospel. Likewise from the many volumes of excellent sermons in print, it is evident that the Gospel, and its great doctrines and truths; have been for many Years, and do still continue to be preached and published by the divines of the established Church most ably and faithfully. Now this charge may with great reason and truth be reflected back upon the dissenters themselves, as will appear from the following argument, in which we shall find that the Gospel is preached with more purity and fidelity, and more according to the design of our Lord, in the Churches, than in the meetings. First, for this reason, in the observance of the fasts and festivals of the Church, the clergy are under a kind of necessity, consistently with the duty of the day, to preach upon the great articles and mysteries of Religion, once a Year: *viz.* such as the incarnation of our Saviour, his death and passion, his resurrection and ascension into heaven, his sending the holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the doctrine of the trinity, &c. Now the dissenters by disregarding the feasts and fasts of the Year, neglect the opportunity of discoursing on the chief articles of Christianity upon the proper days and seasons; therefore these important subjects are left to some other time, or else

quite

quite omitted. Therefore in this respect, the Church service is more excellent and beneficial than the meetings, because the people are more certain of having the chief mysteries of the christian faith taught and explained at the proper seasons. If this is not preaching the Gospel, it may be asked what is? I know the common answer is, that the ministers of the established Church, preach upon moral subjects; this is granted, and they are right and judicious in so doing, whenever they think needful: and herein they have the example of our Saviour, who enjoined his disciples the observance of moral duties. Also in religion, morality is included; without which no person is truly religious.

It cannot be denied that the Church Clergy preach as often as the dissenting ministers do, upon the principal subjects of the Christian dispensation, such as I have before mentioned, and likewise such as, the end and design of our Saviour's appearance, and Salvation through him, the inspiration of the holy scriptures, the necessity of divine assistance, the nature and end of the two sacraments, and the duty and obligation of observing them; repentance and forgiveness of sin; and of that life and immortallity which is brought to light thro' the Gospel;

pel; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. These are some of the chief doctrins of the Gospel, which are the frequent and general subjects of discourses in the Church; and the truth of this cannot be denied; therefore how can any presume to say, that the Gospel is preached more purely in the meetings, than in the Churches. For let me ask, what can the dissenters do more than this which I have now described? That they do not so much is very certain, because they lessen and curtail the benefits and privileges of Christ's Gospel, making Salvation a partial mercy; contrary to the revelations of Scripture, which declares that Christ died to purchase and obtain Salvation for all mankind in general, who by obedience to the divine precepts will endeavour to make themselves worthy of it. Saint John says that Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John II. 2. If we shall not hereafter inherit the blessings which Christ has purchased for man, it will be owing to sin and impenitence, and not to any absolute decree of God, (as supposed by the dissenters) for he has mercifully revealed his will to all, and would have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

There are abundant testimonies of scripture which declare Salvation to be general, and to be obtained by all men upon certain conditions. But I will first prove from Scripture that the idea of a partial Salvation is absurd and inconsistent, that it is contrary both to reason and scripture.

I doubt not but some will think it a waste of time, to confute a doctrine so manifestly erroneous and unscriptural: but the necessity of the present times require it, since many are deluded into a belief of this error, which sets aside the general design and tenor of the Gospel, by making useless the means of grace, which God has ordained for our Salvation.

This doctrine has often great influence upon the mind; some highly presume themselves the elect of God, others are led to despair. In the first case, they vainly imagine their Salvation to be so effectually secured that nothing can endanger it; therefore means of grace are often considered to be of no consequence, for the elect (they imagine) are above ordinances. In the second case, they apprehend means of grace are of no use to them 'till God has opened their hearts; thus they neglect the divine ordinances the greatest part or perhaps all their lives: and some

some under a notion of being deserted and neglected by their Creator, despair of reconciliation here and hereafter; and instances are not unfrequent of this impression driving people to madness. A little consideration upon this subject will point out the mistake.

Let us enquire why God should prefer one person before another; or why some should be decreed elect and others reprobate. It cannot be for their persons, for God regardeth not the person of any man; he seeth not as man seeth, men look on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. God also regardeth not the worldly rank or dignity of men; for the rich and poor are of equal consideration with him: they are all the work of his hands: he neither loves nor favours, nor neglects and discourages any wantonly and unaccountably; he utterly disclaims partiality as an unjust aspersion: he is not capable of that imperfection which is observable in some parents, to be indulgent to some children above others, from partiality or prejudice. If any parent should heap his favours upon one Child, and then shew him the greatest fondness merely because those favours have been heaped upon him; and refuse to shew any kindness or bestow any favour upon any other of his Children, and yet hate and pu-

nish him, because he has not what he could not have without his will; every body would condemn such a parent of the most partial fondness, and of the most arbitrary proceedings, and impute it to weakness of understanding, or strength of passion. And yet this is what the dissenters are not afraid to impute to Almighty God; when they represent him as doing all for some by an absolute decree, and loving and favouring them for what they have no part in; and on the other hand passing by others, and refusing his strength, without which they cannot move, and hating and condemning them for what they cannot help. And yet this is called preaching the Gospel.

If we cannot observe the above conduct in an earthly parent, without calling in question his wisdom and justice, how dare we impute it to Almighty God, who is holy, just, and impartial, and who makes no arbitrary or groundless discriminations, "he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" He therefore cannot shew any favour towards any person grounded on no reason. No person can seem amiable or worthy of his acceptance, but those only who by virtue and piety are really so. As God has an exact knowledge of all mankind, and a perfect rectitude of ~~evil,~~ will he can in no wise be partial.

partial. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; therefore there is nothing can incline him to regard one person before another, but only goodness, wherein he delights. It is manifest by abundant testimony of scripture, that impartiality is a divine attribute and perfection of God; and this is more especially observable in the great work of redemption and Salvation. In pursuing this consideration, we may soon determine where the Gospel is preached; and where it is not preached.

That is not the Gospel which is preached and taught in the meetings, declaring that Salvation belongs only to some chosen individuals, and that the general bulk of mankind are excluded: and that the joys of heaven depend upon an absolute decree, and not upon personal good conduct. This notion makes the God of truth contradict himself, and makes the promises and threats, and the laws and precepts of Scripture vain and useless. The directions of our Saviour, saying, keep my commandments. John xiv. 15. And Strive to enter in at the strait gate. Luke xiii. 24. are both vain and useless; since if our fate is decreed, no obedience or exertion of our own can alter our condition. This doctrine renders obedience to the divine precepts unnecessary, sets aside and abolishes the neces-

sity of repentance and good works, and frustrates the design of Christ's coming in the flesh; therefore this cannot be preaching the Gospel aright. Of this judge better by hearing the doctrine of the Church.

From the authority of scripture we declare that Christ died to purchase Salvation for all mankind; therefore all by complying with the terms may be benefited by it. The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation hast appeared to all men Titus II. 11. This is the gift and grace of God, which coming down from the Father of light and comfort, was meant to diffuse instruction and consolation amongst all mankind: it was never designed to fill any with unmerited presumption, or expectation of a greater degree of Gods favour; Or to sink any into dejection or despair, but its bright and glorious splendor like the day spring from on high, shone forth to all without distinction, to light, direct, and guide them in the way of peace; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world Tit. II. 12.

Whoever will receive the Gospel in spirit and in truth, must manifest its effects in the fruits of a good life. There is nothing more frequent-

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ly asserted, or more seriously urged in holy Scripture than this, that God will judge and deal with mankind impartially according to their works; or the tenor of their practice duly estimated by the rules of the Gospel; so that the really better man will prove the happier, and the worse man will be the more wretched. "Every man will receive the deeds done in his "body." This is the doctrine of the Gospel, which is faithfully preached in the established Church.

The notion which the dissenters have of Christ's Gospel, is different from this now described, therefore their doctrine concerning it must be wrong, because it is not the doctrine which cometh from God. It's inconsistency is so striking, that it is astonishing how any people could ever imagine it, or believe it; being founded on the vain conceit of man, and not on the word of scripture; and renders man a mere passive machine in the work of Salvation, and the means of grace useless ordinances, rules, precepts and sacrifices were prescribed in vain, if our performance will not obtain the rewards promised to obedience in the promulgation of them. In vain are terms and conditions proposed to us in the Gospel, if conformity to them will not gain us the acceptance of God. Even

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the awful revelations of the last general judgment are revealed in vain, and would only excite the most dreadful alarms and apprehensions in the human mind, if it is not in our power by piety, repentance and good works, to avoid the shocking sentence of condemnation. They indeed who can amuse themselves with the deceitful imagination of being the called, the elect, without personal good conduct, may make themselves easy in this life; but whether it will further their Salvation in the next world, may easily be known by the declarations of Scripture. Those errors which flatter people with an easier and broader way to heaven, than by practical obedience, will not be found in the Gospel. There we see a religion abundant in justice, mercy, goodness, and truth; which appeared to inform and instruct mankind.

If ye love me, keep my commandments. John xiv. 15.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. John xv. 14.

Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Saint Matt. vii. 21. These are the

the grand infallible declarations of the word of God, delivered from that mouth which never opened in vain; expressing the general duty of mankind, according to the eternal reason of things, and the declared will of heaven.

If we would obtain the love and favour of God, and happily profit by his grace, we must obey his will, and carefully walk in his ways; from this course there can be no exemption, no dispensation for any Person; not even for those who imagine themselves elect. For all mankind have the same means of grace afforded, to enable them to perform their duty, and to attain Salvation. The word of God as the light of heaven, shines to all without exception; the same rules are prescribed to all; none can otherwise than by proceeding in the common road of religious and moral practice arrive to happiness.

The design of the Gospel dispensation is general; therefore St. Peter declared when his eyes where open, that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. And we read in the Scriptures that the piety of Job an Edomite, of Melchisedeck a Canaanite, of Jethro a Midianite, were all pleasing to him; he accepted the alms and

heard

heard the prayers of Cornelius a Roman soldier. This is the general tenor of the Scriptures: and with respect to absolute decrees, there does not appear to be any thing in the Bible or Testament that leads to such a conclusion: but pardon and Salvation depend on faith and good works.

The dissenters take their notion of election and absolute decrees from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, IX. 13. which text the Apostle quotes from Malachi, I. 2, 3. I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau. It is plain that the prophet in this Chapter, meant not the personal election of one party, and the reprobation of the other; but that the promised Messiah was to come from Jacob, and not from Esau. Therefore Jacob is said to be loved, and Esau to be hated: because the posterity of Jacob was preferred to that of Esau, in fulfilling the promise made to Abraham concerning the Messiah.

By the expressions of loving and hating we are to understand preferring: for in this sense our Saviour used the latter expression in St. Luke XIV. 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple; that is, he that preferred his father and mother before him,

him, and was not willing to give up every thing in the world for his sake and the Gospel's, was not worthy to be his disciple. Now this text quoted from the prophet, refers not to the personal condition of the party, but to their respective posterities. And the Apostle by quoting this text, meant not to support the doctrine of predestination, but to reconcile the Jews to the dispensation of the Gospel, to whom according to the words of the Apostles in Acts XIII. it was first to be preached, as being the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and upon their refusal of it, to the Gentiles.

The Jews were the peculiar people of God, but at the appearance of the Messiah in the world, that distinction was to cease; for the Gentiles as well as the Jews, were to be admitted to the blessings and privileges of that redemption and Salvation, which Christ came to accomplish. And it is plain that the Apostle in this Chapter, referred not to the personal election of individuals, and the exclusion of others, but to the election of nations to the benefit and blessings of the Gospel dispensation. Therefore this part of the writings of St. Paul, when considered in a regular manner, gives no support to the doctrine of absolute decrees.

Neither this, nor any other part of scripture,

can with reason be an inducement to hope for Salvation, without obedience to the moral precepts of the Gospel. It is incumbent upon us to consider what the religion of Christ is; that it is not being professed Christians, that can at last avail us, without adorning the doctrine of God by holiness of life; we must live in the practice of Religion, and carefully obey the will of our Father who is in heaven. It is a most fatal mistake to hope to be saved on any other terms, than those that are so plainly decreed and irrevocably confirmed. And that doctrine which flatters people with the hopes of being saved on any other terms, is not the doctrine of the Gospel. And wheresoever that doctrine is preached which tends to weaken the necessity and efficacy of repentance and a good life, there we may safely say the Gospel is not preached.

Those who pretend that they forsake the Church, because the Gospel is not preached in it, I now leave to their own reflections; sincerely wishing that they may soon perceive their mistake, and may be convinced that in the established Church, the Gospel is preached faithfully, religiously, and tending to edification and salvation.

## INFANT BAPTISM IS OFTEN MADE A PLEA FOR SEPARATING FROM THE CHURCH.

THE good and happiness of their children is the earnest desire of most parents; to promote their success in life every probable means are suggested and exerted: and it is accounted unnatural and cruel to neglect their duty in this respect. If a breach of parental duty is culpable in things pertaining to this world; how much more so is it in matters of everlasting concern. It is unaccountable that parents who wish well to their children in every other respect, should yet object to their receiving the tokens of God's grace, which entitle them to heaven and happiness.

The objection of the dissenters to the baptism of infants, is because they are incapable of the

ends of baptism: but this is a mistake as I will endeavour to shew.

Under the Jewish dispensation, children were admitted into the divine covenant at eight days old; and it does not appear that they are excluded by the Gospel of Christ: on the contrary, many passages in scripture, lead us to conclude, that our Saviour continued the practice of admitting infants into the evangelical covenant; and also that the Apostles did the same. Baptism being that sacrament by which we are admitted and entered into the divine covenant, remains the same under the Gospel, that it was under the Law. Christ came to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, to make peace between them, to reconcile them both in one body on the cross: it was necessary that he should abolish those ceremonies which distinguished them; and which if continued might hinder the progress of the Gospel. For this reason our Lord changed the iniatory sacrament of circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant of grace, into the easy and practicable ceremony of baptism. The only alteration was in the sign or seal; the covenant remains the same. For Christians are admitted into the same Gospel covenant, which was confirmed before to Abraham in Christ.

As

As circumcision was the sacrament of admission into the divine covenant before and under the law, and the seal of the righteousness of faith, so is baptism: it as effectually confirms and establishes the covenant betwixt God and man now, as circumcision did then. The covenant is the same, except the alteration before mentioned in the ritual, therefore those persons who were capable of being admitted into the covenant of God by circumcision, are equally capable of being admitted into covenant with him by Baptism under the Gospel: no limitation of age or abilities being requisite more in one period than the other. The command which God gave to Abraham in Gen. XVII. 10. expressly requiring that infants should be admitted into covenant with him by circumcision, still continues with equal force with respect to the admission of infants into the same covenant by baptism.

The nature of the covenant which God made with Abraham, was spiritual and evangelical, and young children were initiated into it by God's own appointment; therefore to assert that infants are incapable of baptism is unreasonable: for if they were capable of circumcision and baptism under the law, they are certainly capable of baptism now. Moreover that covenant which God made with Abraham and his seed

seed, was the same for substance which he has since renewed with us in Christ. Circumcision was a sign and seal of the same grace under the old testament, that baptism is under the new. Since the covenants are for substance the same, both spiritual and evangelical, only the rites and ceremonies which were signs of these covenants, and seals of that grace being different, consequently infants are as capable of one as of the other. Circumcision and baptism, being seals or tokens of the same covenant, appointed by God to be made use of for the same purpose at different periods.

As Baptism succeeded circumcision, and was appointed for the same end, *viz.* initiation into the covenant of God, so it is most reasonable it should be administered to the same kind of persons. And as God commanded infants to be circumcised, Gen. xvii. 12. so doubtles he would have them to be baptized. And as Christ in St. Mat. xxviii. 19. did not except them; it is reasonable to conclude, that he intended no alteration in this particular; but that children should be initiated into the Christian as well as into the Jewish religion. Baptism being a ceremony of admitting proselytes unto the Law in the Jewish Church, without any limitation of age; our Saviour continued the use of it, and made

made it a ceremony of admitting proselytes unto the Gospel, only transferring the ceremony from the Jewish Church to his own. The Apostles who were Jews themselves, and were directed to baptize all nations into the Church of Christ, no doubt continued the same practice to which they had been accustomed; having received no express command from Christ to the contrary. That part of the ceremony respecting the admission of infants, being neither repealed, nor changed, remained in full force. And the Scriptures inform us that the Apostles baptized whole households, among whom children and infants must be included, as of Stephanas 1 Cor. 1. 6. The household or family of Lydia, Acts, xvi. 15. And the jaylor and all his family were baptized in the night. Herein the Apostles acted in conformity to their Saviour's command, which was not limited, but general and comprehensive; "go ye, and baptize all nations"; accordingly they baptized whole houses, without making any exception to the persons contained in them. If our Saviour had not designed baptism to be continued to infants, there would have been a prohibition contained in the Apostle's commission, to prevent their falling into any mistake about it. But as there was no such prohibition, and as the scriptures are silent in this matter, therefore (as a Learned writer observes) infant baptism is confirmed

confirmed and established for ever.

Thus infant baptism is an apostolical practice, and has continued in the Church from the first ages of Christianity. We see then the weakness of the objection which the dissenters urge against this rite, *viz.* that infants are incapable of the ends of baptism. They are capable of all the ends of it, as it is instituted for a sign from God towards us, to assure us of his gracious favour, and to consign unto us the benefits of the covenant of grace. Their childhood does not hinder them from being made members of the Christian Church; altho' they are too young to understand the nature of the Gospel covenant, or to perform the duties enjoined upon its members; their infancy does not hinder them from being cleansed from original sin, and of receiving the sign of restoration to God's grace and favour. Infants are as capable of the visible signs of God's favour, and of the benefits of the spiritual covenant under the new testament, as they were under the old.

The dissenters pretend that baptism was meant only for grown persons, because our Saviour in Mat. xxviii. 19. commanded his disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c. now infants (they say) cannot be taught; and as teaching is mentioned before baptizing, grown persons

persons can only be intended by this direction. This objection is soon answered and in a few words. The Apostles were commanded to teach, that is to disciple (as in the Greek) or to make disciples; therefore the meaning is, as if our Saviour had said, go and make proselytes or disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost.

Another objection which the dissenters make to this ceremony, is the manner of administring it; *viz.* by sprinkling the baptized person with water. They pretend that the baptism of Christ in the river Jordan, establishes a precedent for the like practice in the Christian Church. This objection also is soon answered; tho' it is often made a plea for separation.

The baptism of John was a different ordinance from that appointed by Christ, and practised by his Apostles, and according to the words of Saint Paul was used for a very different purpose, that of repentance and preparation for the solemn admission into the faith and Church of Christ. Acts xix. 4. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him that should come

after him, that is on Christ Jesus. When they heard that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

If the baptism of John had been sufficient for admission into Christ's Church, and for salvation, Saint Paul would not have baptized them again. But the baptism of John was to repentance, as he confessed.

Even supposing that the disciples of John were all baptized in a river, (which probably was not always the case) there is no reason why christians should baptize in a river also; for the quantity of water contributes nothing to to the validity of the ceremony. And it is very certain that the Apostles did not consider immersion in a river as essential to baptism, as appears in Acts xvi. 15 and 33. In the baptism of Lydia and her household, and the Jailor and his family. It is not very likely that in these cases, they had a river or a sufficient quantity of water, into which they could be plunged in the middle of night. Therefore it is reasonable to think, that the Apostles took a greater discretionary latitude, and instead of immersion of the whole body, only sprinkled them with water: as was common afterwards among the primitive Christians in sickness or on their death beds.

It is probable that at the first institution of baptism, in those warm countries where bathing is a pleasant and usual recreation, this ceremony might be performed by immersion; but the governors of the Church knowing this not to be essential to the rite, wisely ordained that the sick who kept their beds, should only be sprinkled with water; which St. Cyprian declared to be a valid and effectual baptism. For the same reason it was very charitably and prudently indulged to tender infants, (especially in the northern countries) whose tender age, and sometimes weakness or sickness, could not endure to be plunged entirely in the water, without manifest hazard of life; therefore the custom of sprinkling has wisely been introduced and justly esteemed for the above reasons, to be equally acceptable to God, in order to obtain the gracious benefits proposed in this institution, *viz.* the remission of sins, and the assistance of divine grace.

That the early Christians regarded baptism in a river as a matter of indifference may be concluded from their having baptisteries or buildings near the Church, where this rite might be decently and solemnly administered. In the first ages, the baptisteries or places of baptism, were without the Church, until the sixth age, when

when the fonts were removed from the baptistery to the Church porch, as being the most suitable place for the administration of a rite, which gives admission into the Church, and initiates into the blessings and privileges of Christianity: afterwards they were taken into the Church; and in the old Churches placed near the western end.* From hence it is plain, that baptism was not always practised by immersion in a river, as the dissenters urge; and also that the ceremony of infant baptism has continued in the Church many hundred Years; and this appears from the situation, size and form of the old fonts.

The effect of this rite of baptism, does not proceed from the quantity of water, into which the body is immersed, or which is poured upon it; but by the spirit of God producing that effect upon the soul, of which the water is the outward visible sign or form in baptism. Therefore God's grace may accompany the outward act of sprinkling as well as immersion. Saint Peter imagining that the washing of his feet could not accomplish a general cleansing, requested our Saviour to wash his hands and his head. But our Lord reproved him in these

* *Bingham's Antiquities Book.* VIII. *Chap.* 7.

words,

words. John xiii. 10. He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. Teaching him, that it was not the outward act or application of water, which affected his cleansing, but the operation of the spirit on the soul, producing that internal holiness, of which an idea was excited in the mind by the outward act. The same conclusion may be applied to the sprinkling with water in baptism.

Children who by reason of their tender age cannot perform the solemn promise of baptism, the Church has appointed them Godfathers and Godmothers, who in the name of the parties baptized, make this promise for them, until they come to years of discretion to take it upon themselves. But to this part of the office of baptism, the dissenters object, alledging that it obliges the sureties to make such promises in behalf of the infant, as they are not certain they can be able to perform. Here they mistake in imagining that the sureties promise in their own names; whereas the promise is made in the child's name and behalf, by those who piously and charitably become bondsmen for the poor helpless soul, and covenant for it, to procure it a right to eternal glory; and thus in its stead and name answer to all the interrogatories

of

of baptism. And this is plain from the demand of the minister, immediately after the direction to the Godfathers and Godmothers, "I demand "therefore, dost thou in the name of this child, &c."

The exhortation after baptism teaches them the nature of their suretiship and their obligation to observe it. "Forasmuch as this child has pro- "mised by you his sureties to renounce the Devil "and all his works, to believe in God and to serve "him; ye must remember that it is your parts "and duties to take care that this infant be "taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, "what a solemn vow, promise and profession he "hath here made by you. And that he may "know these things the better, ye shall call upon "him to hear sermons, and chiefly ye shall pro- "vide that he may learn the creed, the Lord's "prayer, and the ten commandments in the vul- "gar tongue, &c." They are to take care that the infant be taught the nature and obligation of the covenant of baptism, they are to put the child in mind of its own duty, and to endea- that it may be brought up in the knowledge of the Christian Religion. Such an undertaking and promise as this, any person if they chuse to have regard to their undertaking may easily perform.

I will

I will end this subject with a conclusion shewing the benefit and necessity of infant baptism.

That infants are as capable of being admitted into the Church of God, as well under the new testament as they were under the old, as I have observed before, cannot be denied. Baptism is a sign and seal of the pardon of sin, and to assign unto them a right of inheritance in the kingdom of heaven: and it may do this to infants as well as to grown people: for it seals the pardon of original sin, gives assurance of God's grace and favour, and acquires a certain right to eternal life.

If Children who die unbaptized are admitted into the kingdom of heaven, it is by the extraordinary mercy of God, tho' uncovenanted mercy, because they are not entered into his covenant. In hopes of or relying upon God's great extraordinary mercy, we ought not to neglect the ordinary means of Salvation which he has appointed: for baptism was ordained that we might acquire a right to the privileges of the Gospel, and of the promises of the holy spirit. And this shews the necessity of this rite of initiation into the covenant of God, that if we live we may be entitled to the privileges of the Gospel, and be blessed with the assist-

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ance of divine grace, by observing and performing the promises and vows made in our name and behalf at baptism; and that infants dying after baptism, being cleansed from original sin and wrath of God, are become children of grace, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Before I conclude this subject, I conceive it a duty to make this observation; that as baptism is a token and pledge to assure us of God's favour, therefore to make it valid, and conducive to the salvation of the parties baptized, the office must be performed by the lawful appointed ministers of God; but when it is pretended to be performed by those, who are not lawfully authorized and commissioned to administer divine ordinances, it is invalid and stands for nothing, tho' the ceremony be performed in a river, even in the river Jordan.

## THE OBJECTIONS OF THE DISSENTERS TO CONFIRMATION ANSWERED.

THEIR first objection to this office is, that it was not ordained either by Christ or his Apostles; but this is another mistake, as I hope to be able to prove.

If our Saviour did not so expressly institute confirmation, as he did the two sacraments; yet by his promise to send the holy spirit to his disciples after his ascension, and to remain with his Church for ever, John xiv. 16. it appears that some rite should be instituted for the perpetual assistance of the holy Ghost.

The Apostles having received the gift of the holy Ghost in a very conspicuous and remarka-

ble manner, were enabled to confer the same gift on others, who having embraced the christian faith, had been baptized: and accordingly the Apostles instituted the rite of laying on of hands. And that Almighty God approved of their institution, appears from the plentiful effusion of the spirit, which they experienced from the laying on of hands of the Apostles. A remarkable instance of this related in Acts VIII. 14, 15, 16, 17. Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who when they were come down prayed for them, that they might receive the holy Ghost. For as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy Ghost. Where we see that the Samaritans, who had been baptized before by St. Philip the Deacon, did not receive the holy Ghost, 'till St. Peter and St. John had confirmed them: And the successors of the Apostles, *viz.* the Bishops continued the same practice, according to St. Cyprian and St. Jerom. Now the gift of the holy Ghost which was given to persons baptized, by the Apostles prayer and laying on of hands, was not always the gift of miracles, and speaking with tongues and prophesying: St. Paul reckons confirmation amongst the fundamentals,

damentals, which were necessary to all ages of the Church, Heb. VI. 1, 2. but the gift of miracles was not so. Confirmation was administered to all baptized persons, but all baptized persons were not to have the gift of miracles. 1 Cor. XII. 8. For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another working of miracles. In the days of the Apostles the inward grace of confirmation was attended by miracles; but this was not the principal gift that was expected, or obtained, even in the early times of the Gospel, when miracles were necessary to confirm their preaching: but now since the Christian faith is sufficiently confirmed we receive the divine grace in another manner.

Whatever the dissenters may insinuate, the members of the established Church, have not now any notion or expectation, that the gift of miracles will accompany, or follow the act of confirmation. In due order and direction of their spiritual governors and teachers, the members of the established Church attend upon the rite of confirmation; that being come to years of discretion and reason, and having some knowledge of the Christian Religion, as being able to repeat the articles of faith, the ten commandments and the Lord's prayer; and also the church catechism, they may release their sureties

from their engagement, and take upon themselves the vows and promises which were made at their baptism, and renew and ratify the same in confirmation; when by the prayers and laying on of the bishop's hands, they may receive divine grace and assistance, and be consummated with the seal of the Lord, stedfastly purposing to discharge the conditions of their baptismal covenant.

The writer of a certain book, (which is accounted a standard book with the dissenters,) after quoting a part of the first prayer in this office, asks the following question, (apparently with a design to put a wrong construction upon the sense) "I pray you, Sir, in the name of God, "inform me, what warrant has the bishop to pro-"nounce a man's sins all forgiven, and himself "regenerated by the holy Ghost, upon no other "grounds than his being able to say the short ca-"techism, and declaring that he stands by his "baptismal engagements? Will you say that this "is the Christian doctrine concerning the terms "of acceptance and forgiveness with God?"* The insinuation that seems to be here intended is illiberal. This prayer one would think is so plain, that it is hardly possible to put any other

* *Towgood's dissent.*

construction

construction upon it, than that which is meant.

We are said to be regenerated when we are baptized: therefore God is here blessed and praised for having vouchsafed to regenerate his servants by water and the holy Ghost, that is in baptism; when we are washed from original sin; therefore we are said to receive forgiveness of all our sins, and are become innocent, as being regenerated with water, and also with the holy Ghost, which (the Apostle says) is given for several purposes.

It is not meant in this office, that we are made regenerate upon account of our promises and professions: but our regeneration was effected in baptism; when (as an ancient writer has observed) the holy Spirit gives us sufficient to make us innocent: but in confirmation it gives increase, and makes us gracious.

The laying on of hands, to which the dissenters so much object, is a very ancient custom, practised by the Jews in imitation of Jacob, when he gave his blessing. And our Saviour laid his hands upon little children and blessed them.

In the christian religion the office of confirmation was always celebrated by a bishop, whose benediction

benediction or blessing, is an humble and earnest supplication to God, that he would defend his servants with his heavenly grace, that they may increase in his holy spirit.

This ceremony being performed by the chief pastors of the Church, the assistance of the holy spirit may reasonably be expected, it therefore concerns every particular person to be careful not to omit it. It is a beneficial duty, conducive to holiness; and in a Church where infant baptism is practised, must be allowed to be necessary.

## MISTAKEN OBJECTIONS TO THE BURIAL OFFICE ANSWERED.

THIS the dissenters pretend is not a christian institution. For thus a certain writer enquires. "Is the burial of the dead a christian "institution, any part of the religion or worship "of Christ?" This question contains the observation I have made above, and is another of their errors.

The burial of the dead is a religious and a christian institution. Eccles. XII. 7. The dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it. The preacher no doubt meant that the body should be deposited or buried in the dust. And there are many places in the scripture, which relate that

that the burial of the dead was religiously observed. Abraham was careful to bury his dead. David commended the men of Jabesh. Gilead because they had buried the bodies of Saul and Jonathan. And to omit to bury the dead was a great crime. Thus burial is a religious and an ancient institution: And I may add also a christian, because it has ever been piously observed and continued in the christian Church.

The order and office of burial as now used in the established Church, is wisely designed more for the comfort and instruction of the living than the benefit of the dead: and is upon the whole a solemn and improving ceremony, calculated to comfort the pious mourners for the loss of their deceased friend, and to comfirm the doctrine of the resurrection, and everlasting life. Yet this awful duty is often found much fault with; in particular by the writer of the answers to the Rev. Mr. White's Letters, where he objects to that part of the office which is repeated at the solemn interment of the body.* "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of "his great mercy to take unto himself the soul "of our dear brother. And also to part of the "prayers at the grave: wherein we give hearty

* *Towgood. page 53.*

thanks

"thanks and pray that when we depart out of "this life, we may rest in Christ as our hope is "this our brother doth." This says he "is what "your Church commands you solemnly to say "over every person brought to be buried; (except "those to whom the church refuses burial) even "over those who have been guilty of heinous sins, "and die hardened and impenitent wretches:" yet continues he "you are to declare that Almigh- "ty God hath in his great mercy taken him, "though he died a victim to public justice, and "was taken away in wrath;" yet adds he, "you "are to give God hearty thanks that he hath "taken this your brother out of the miseries of "this sinful world, though you have the strong- "est reason to believe that he is gone down to "realms of greater misery below. And you "are to profess, before God, that you hope the "man rests in Christ, and pray that you your- "selves may rest in Christ in the same manner "as this your brother doth, even though you "have every reason to believe that he died in his "sins, and is therefore not gone to be with "Christ, where nothing that is defiled can ever "be admitted. Strange, (exclaims he) and ex- "tremely shocking! What can the people "think.?"

All this repetition which I have now quoted,

is not only unreasonable, but unchristian; and the answer shall be plain, short, and scriptural.

When the soul leaves the body, either in a natural or violent way, it returns to God who gave it. The corruptible body is to be taken care of by man, to be decently buried out of the way. But God disposes of the soul himself, He is the only judge of the life it has led in the body. For men (as this writer hath done) positively to decide the eternal fate of the soul, is sinfully rash and dangerous. It belongs not to man but to God.

There is no impropriety in this part of the office, in saying it pleased God to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother, because God takes the soul and disposes of it himself.

In his objection to part of the second prayer at the grave, this writer has made an addition which alters the sense, and is not in the prayer: his expression is. "And you are to profess before "God, that you hope the man rests in Christ, "and pray that you yourselves may rest in Christ "in the same manner as this your brother doth."* Now the words of the prayer are that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our

* *Towgood, page* 53.

hope

hope is, this our brother doth. It is not said in the same manner as this our brother doth: Therefore the additional words are meant to convey a different idea; though the sense of the petition is very obvious, and expressive of hopeful resignation of the deceased into the hands of God, reminding us of our own approaching dissolution and sentence.

We know not the fate of the dead, but we may safely hope the best. It is a dangerous presumption for man to prescribe bounds to God's mercy, or pretend to know the final doom passed upon another person. Against this rash judging we are cautioned by our Lord. Math. VII. Judge not that ye be not judged. And the Apostle St. Paul reproves this censoriousness, in Rom. XIV. 4. Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant.

In both collects at the grave, we pray more for ourselves than for the departed person, of whom (by performing his funeral rites) we are taking our last farewel. His probation is ended; but our own state not being yet determined, we have power to repent and amend, and may obtain pardon, and glorious rest in heaven.

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